

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method of enhancing at least one performance property of an aqueous polymer dispersion comprising at least one water-soluble ionic compound, which comprises

removing at least 50 mol% of the at least one water-soluble ionic compound from the polymer dispersion, and then

adding at least one salt of a monoalkyl or dialkyl ester of a sulfonated dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the aqueous polymer dispersion is obtained by emulsion polymerization.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the dispersed polymer in the polymer dispersion is a polymer obtained by free-radical addition polymerization which is synthesized from at least 60% by weight of at least one principal monomer selected from the group consisting of C₁ to C₂₀ alkyl (meth)acrylates, vinyl esters of carboxylic acids comprising up to 20 carbon atoms, vinylaromatics comprising up to 20 carbon atoms, ethylenically unsaturated nitriles, vinyl halides, vinyl ethers of alcohols comprising 1 to 10 carbon atoms, aliphatic hydrocarbons comprising 2 to 8 carbon atoms and one or two double bonds, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one water-soluble ionic compound is an ionic emulsifier.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein at least 90 mol% of the at least one water-soluble ionic compound is removed.

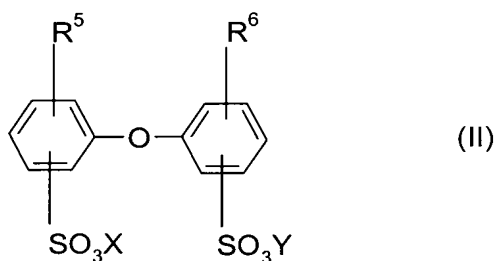
Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one ionic compound is removed by treating the dispersion with an ion exchanger resin, by diafiltration or by dialysis.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one salt of a monoalkyl or dialkyl ester of a sulfonated dicarboxylic acid is a dialkyl ester.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one salt of a monoalkyl or dialkyl ester of a sulfonated dicarboxylic acid is a dialkyl ester of sulfonated succinic acid.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one salt of a monoalkyl or dialkyl ester of a sulfonated dicarboxylic acid is added in an amount of from 0.01 to 5 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of the dispersed polymer.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): An aqueous polymer dispersion obtained by the method of claim 1, wherein anionic emulsifiers or protective colloids used to make said aqueous dispersion that are present as said water-soluble ionic compounds prior to said removing step are limited to anionic surfactants selected from the group consisting of alkali metal salts of di- C₈ to C₁₂ alkyl esters of sulfosuccinic acid, alkali metal salts and ammonium salts of di- C₈ to C₁₂ alkyl sulfates, C₁₂ to C₁₈ alkylsulfonic acids, C₉ to C₁₈ alkylarylsulfonic acids, and compounds of the formula II



in which R^5 and R^6 are hydrogen or C_4 to C_{14} alkyl and are not simultaneously hydrogen, and X and Y can be alkali metal ions and/or ammonium ions.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): An adhesive comprising the aqueous polymer dispersion of claim 10 and at least one additive.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): A method of bonding two substrates, comprising bonding the two substrates with the adhesive of claim 11, wherein at least one of the substrates to be bonded with the adhesive is a transparent polymer film.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 12, wherein the transparent polymer film comprises a backing material, and wherein the adhesive is applied to the transparent polymer film backing material.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 13, wherein the transparent polymer film is a PVC film.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): A self-adhesive article comprising the adhesive of claim 11.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The aqueous polymer dispersion of claim 10, in the form of an adhesive.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): A method of bonding two substrates, comprising bonding the two substrates with the adhesive of claim 16, wherein at least one of the substrates to be bonded with the adhesive is a transparent polymer film.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 17, wherein the transparent polymer film comprises a backing material, and wherein the adhesive is applied to the transparent polymer film backing material.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 18, wherein the transparent polymer film is a PVC film.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): A self-adhesive article comprising the adhesive of claim 16.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 6, wherein the at least one ionic compound is removed by treating the dispersion with an ion exchanger resin.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 6, wherein the at least one ionic compound is removed by diafiltration.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 6, wherein the at least one ionic compound is removed by dialysis.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): An adhesive comprising the aqueous polymer dispersion of claim 11, wherein the at least one additive is selected from the group consisting of fillers, dyes, flow agents, thickeners, tackifiers and mixtures thereof.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): An aqueous polymer dispersion obtained by the method of claim 1, wherein substantially all of the water-soluble ionic compounds have been removed from the polymer dispersion, prior to adding the at least one salt of a monoalkyl or dialkyl ester of a sulfonated dicarboxylic acid.